DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 326 213 IR 052 712

TITLE	IFLA General Conference 1988. Opening and Plenary Sessions. Papers.
INSTITUTION	International Federation of Library Associations, The Hague (Netherlands).
PUB DATE	Sep 88
NOTE	9p.; Papers presented at the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) General Conference (54th, Sydney, Australia, August 30-September 3, 1988).
PUB TYPE	Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Access to Information; *Books; *Information Sources; *Library Cooperation; *Library Role; Preservation; *Reading

ABSTRACT

Focusing on the conference theme "Living Together: People, Libraries, Information," the opening speech of the 54th International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) General Conference was presented by association president Hans-Peter Geh. This paper reflects on: (1) the significance of holding the conference in Australia; (2) the role of libraries in the integration of cultural differences into one polity; (3) the interdependence of countries and increased demand for information worldwide; (4) the history, importance, and future of the book as the most important vehicle for the dissemination of information and for the exchange of knowledge, opinions, and ideas; (5) the promotion of reading and the fight against illiteracy; and (6) the intensive cooperation between Unesco and IFLA and their nongovernmental organizations; (7) the 1988 fire in the library of the Leningrad Academy of Science; and (8) the 1988 revival of Egypt's Alexandrina Library. The plenary paper, "IFLA in the Antipodes: A Regional Perspective" (Warren Horton, National Library of Australia), discusses the Year of the Reader Programme to be mounted in Australia in 1990; information planning in Australia over the previous 5 years; and progress toward a national information policy for Australia. Both English and German versions of the opening speech are provided. (CGD)

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OPENING AND PLENARY SESSIONS

Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House
Session: 74 Tuesday 30 August 1600 - 1700

Opening Speech *(071-PLEN-1-E)*

Hans-Peter Geh
President IFLA

Eroffnungsansprache des Praesidenten *(071-PLEN-1-G)*

Hans-Peter Geh
Praesidente IFLA

Session: 75 Tuesday 30 August 1715 - 1820

IFLA in the Antipodes: a regional perspective *(046-PLE-1-E)*

Warren Horton
Director-General
National Library of Australia

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OPENING SPEECH BY PRESIDENT HANS-PETER GEH

I extend a cordial welcome to all of you who have come here to the 54th IFLA General Conference in Sydney, the portal to Australia, where 200 years ago the first European settlement was founded.

Sydney presents itself today as an important, industrious and hospitable city, imprinted by the magical silhouette around the harbour entrance with the special landmark of the grandiose Opera House, so unparalleled in its architectural splendour. I will never forget a concert that I heard there in November last year where European and Australian music was presented and where I, then, was initiated in a musical manner to our general theme this year "Living Together".

IFLA is holding its General Conference here in Australia for the first time, on a continent which the Greek geographer and mathematician, Ptolemy, already had a notion — if a vague one — about and which he called terra incognita. As we know, this continent was already inhabited about 40 000 years ago and in the last 200 years people from all over the world immigrated to this very promising land.

Many races, cultures and religions make up, as it were, a microcosm which reflects the macrocosm of our earth. It is encouraging to see that here in Australia the cultural particularities of the original inhabitants have been maintained alongside those of the later immigrants.

Theatres, concerts, museums and especially the libraries carry on the cultivation of this cultural inheritance and convey, as it were, a unity of multiplicity.

Libraries, thus, play an important role in the integration of the cultural differences into one polity and it is especially important to emphasize at this time that this multicultural librarianship is also supported to a large degree by the Library Association of Australia.

The theme "Living Together: People, Libraries, Information" appeals not only to harmonious working together and mutual understanding on a national level, but also in the same way in international dimensions.

In view of the interdependence of countries and due to increasing demand for information in all parts of the globe, the international exchange of information is the dictate of the hour. Such free exchange of information over and beyond national orders, the universal accessibility of literature and information in traditional and electronic means, as well as the preservation of cultural heritage in the form of the book are, therefore, the most important prevailing concerns of our international association.

With regards to this, one can only concur with Kenneth Arrow who once said, "If one nation or class has the knowledge which enables it to achieve higher productivity, why are not the others acquiring that information?" Information may not be withheld from any country and it is our duty to fight for this on the foremost front so that the margin between "information-rich and information-poor countries" can be spanned as quickly as possible. Moreover, we must stake everything in order to delegate a decisive role in information acquisition and distribution to the library institutions in all parts of the world, especially since the libraries often represent the only source of access to information, and, of course, on the condition that it is affordable to every person.

Within the spectrum of information means the book still occupies a dominant role today in spite of all of the new media and technology. Just now at the present time there exists a special hunger for books. "Hunger for Books" was also the general theme of the International Publishers Association's Congress in London in June this year. I would like to touch briefly on this topic and make some remarks from my standpoint concerning the role of the book and on the theme of reading promotion. It appears to me especially appropriate because publishers and librarians have the same interest in this subject and, for me, the close cooperation with the publishers is also a particular concern.

For over 500 years the world has lived with the invention of Gutenberg which has contributed significantly more to the change in peoples than has the lead of canons.

The book was an important vehicle of culture in the preceding centuries in all nations and this function is still expected of it today, too.

The written and printed word, as well as reading and the critical examination of written thoughts are essential and indispensible constituents of the human being. For, without the written word the transmittance and continuation of culture is unthinkable. In spite of a multitude of new media the book is and will remain the most important vehicle for the dissemination of literature as well as for research and education and for the exchange of knowledge, opinions and ideas.

Books are above all the most valuable ambassadors of human esteem and serve to promote understanding and cooperation within and between countries and are, therefore, especially important for the peaceful co-existence of peoples.

"The book," the former President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Theodor Heuss, once said, "is the most enduring precursor for the inner understanding of peoples."

Thus, books must be available in ample numbers and in a large range in all countries in order to give every person the possibility of access to information and to guarantee the diversity of opinion.

Let me once more, in summary, praise the importance of the book with this impressive quotation from Clarence Day: "Monuments fall, nations perish, civilizations grow old and die out and after an era of darkness new races build others. But in the world of books are volumes that have seen this happen again and again. And yet they live on still young, still fresh telling men's hearts of the hearts of men centuries dead.

But books must also be able to be read by every person — that would be ideal — in order to satiate the hunger for knowledge and information. It is well-known how important general reading ability is for the political, social, economic and demographic development of peoples and how it enables the individual person to fully develop his abilities, talents and strengths thereby permitting him to have a larger share in the prosperity of society. Therefore, the fight against illiteracy, which is still found all over the world, is an item of extreme urgency and which makes decisive, international actions necessary and where the libraries can also play an important role. For reading crosses over national and cultural barriers and the book is, by all means, the most important form of communication for national and international harmony.

Reading is inherent, as it were, to the human being, but it also decidedly depends upon the right way of reading. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe expressed it in the following way nearly at the end of his long life, "You good people don't know how much time and energy one needs to learn to read. I've had 80 years and still can't say that I've reached the goal."

In the act of reading a subjective reality ensues which one can also describe as innerliness in which one is in the position to play with words and images, emotions and thoughts. Through this play the reader gains the ability to engage in dialogue with himself, to think. Reading should therefore comprise thought, too. Andre Maurois once said, in this regard, "Many people read only so that they must not think". But, on the other hand, "correct" reading requires, of course, contemplation of that read, and, beyond that, reading is a process of permanent interpretation and revision of perception through which the reader can better participate in the societal process of communication.

Special dangers and temptations arise, however, as is well-known, through electronic media, namely for the book and reading culture.

All of this new efficiency in the realm of information distribution which we, for many reasons, of course, welcome from the library world, may not be allowed to lead to the displacement of the book from the scientific and cultural day-to-day life. For those who work solely with computer-programmed, subjective data run the danger of working too prescriptively and too little creatively. They rob themselves, thus, of the possibility of chance discovery which a walk through the stacks or thumbing through a book can provide.

Reading demands effort, collectedness and concentration, and, none the less, time and tranquility which is lacking in many people's lives under the present day living conditions. "I have searched for peace," Thomas Aquinas said, "in everything and I have never found it anywhere except in a corner with a book."

In this way the promotion of reading, which is simultaneously a guardian of existence, is very urgent at the present time for reading belongs to the basic needs of the human being. And libraries, as modern, open, and communicative places of encounter and information centres have unthought-of possibilities and are the ideal environment for reading promotion.

Besides, the readers of books, as a pollster has determined, are happier people, and vice versa, since people are happier, interested and more fulfilled, they also read books.

Through all this we can see that we, together with publishers, must do everything in order to insure a book a proper future. Out of the many worlds which the human being didn't receive as a gift from nature but which he created out of his own imagination, the world of books is one of the greatest, and therefore it should be preserved.

For this reason we wish ourselves for the future a world in which books are easily accessible to an increasing number of people and in which the ability to read as well as the will and wish to reap the fruits of reading will be aspired to by all societies in ever stronger measures.

Promotion of reading and the fight against illiteracy are also among the most important tasks of UNESCO, with whom we in IFLA work together in very close and friendly ways.

The intensive cooperation between UNESCO and IFLA and with FID and ICA as well was visibly emphasized in February of this year when the presidents and secretaries general of these 3 NGOs were invited to Nairobi to the 13th Bureau Meeting of the Intergovernmental Council for the General Information Programme. The several days' long meeting there served, first of all, to elucidate the focal points of the professional work of the NGOs and to define the joint fields of work anew.

Over and above this, it was discussed how the co-operative work could more optimally and effectively be organised. And, in conclusion, an effective strategy for the conception of larger projects in the areas where the needs of developing countries are the greatest at this time was agreed upon. Hand in hand with these prerogatives go the access to literature and information and the conservation and preservation of library materials.

Upon conclusion a joint statement from the 3 NGOs was drafted which manifestly emphasized the significance of UNESCO's General Information Programme. It reads:

"It is in the view of the three NGOs present (FID, IFLA, ICA) that as a consequence of the on-going world-wide revolution that affects the field of information in all its aspects (production, processing, storage and use) the relative weight of PGI within UNESCO's programme and budget should be reconsidered so as to enable UNESCO to serve with efficiency the Member States in this new environment. Without such a re-evaluation, UNESCO's leading intellectual role in the information area will be endangered in the near future. The three NGOs express the hope that the Member States will snare this view in the urgent need for such a reflection for preserving continuity in UNESCO's action."

In addition, the chairperson of the Intergovernmental Council of the General Information Programme, Elin Tornudd, and I, as representative of the 3 NGOs (FID, ICA, IFLA), in the presence of the Assistant Director General, Thomas Keller, had the opportunity to meet with the Director General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor, in Paris on March 7, 1988.

This meeting was concerned with the significance of the PGI Programmes for the entire area of the information branch as well as for the complete joint work of IFLA, FID, ICA, and UNESCO for the prosperity of developing countries. The results of this very constructive and very friendly discussion can be seen in the fact that the Director General of UNESCO has committed himself to strengthening the General Information Programme, to maintaining it intersectorially and interdisciplinarily, and the significance of these actions are underlined by the fact that this programme will have its own paragraph in UNESCO's Medium-Term-Plan 1990–95.

In conclusion I would like to mention two events which have also deeply affected the international library world and which echo our general theme "Living Together: People, Libraries, Information."

Let me begin with the very tragic event which has earned our very deeply felt sympathy and which requires our solidarity. It concerns the fire in the library of the Leningrad Academy of Science on February 14 and 15, 1988.

The devastating fire destroyed 398 000 volumes of which 188 000 were volumes of valuable foreign literature. Part of the valuable newspaper collection was also sacrificed to the flames. 3,6 million volumes suffered water damage and altogether 7 million volumes had to be disinfected by fumigation due to the spread of mould and fungi.

IFLA offered its help immediately upon hearing of the fire.

From May 9–12, 1988, I had the opportunity, as a member of a UNESCO mission, to gain a personal impression of the extent of damage. In the discussions of the problems of restoration, conservation and preservation of the damaged library materials as well as the replacement of important foreign works I committed the support of IFLA.

This help was gratefully accepted by our Leningrad colleagues and by the President of the Leningrad Academy of Sciences, Professor Glebow. With regards to the conservation and preservation problems the organisation for the necessary and feasible support has been put into the hands of those responsible in our Core Programme PAC.

In matters concerning the replacement of burned vital foreign literature I have — as agreed — in the meantime received a list of books from Professor Glebow which are imperative to be reconstituted. We have already sent this list to relevant libraries with the request to check which titles can be given, either in the original or in microforms, to the Academy Library.

I would, however, like to take this opportunity to address all of you with a serious request to lend a helpful hand with the reconstitution, e.g. also through financial contributions. We should show a clear sign of solidarity here now as we did in the instance of Mexico some years ago.

And last but not least, another but happier event: the revival of the Alexandrina-Library which was in times past, next to the famous lighthouse, a landmark of this important Egyptian metropolis.

Following the UNESCO-financed feasibility studies and a symposium with architects and librarians in Alexandria in March this year, which I participated in with great interest, the cornerstone for this library was laid on June 26, 1988 by President Mubarak and the Director General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor. I had the great pleasure of attending this impressive ceremony, too.

The building will be erected directly on the sea shore and on the location where the Museion was said to have stood with the Alexandrina. This library will open its doors widely to the populations of Alexandria and Egypt as well as to scholars from all over the world, especially those who are concerned with archaeology, history, architecture, philology, philosophy and religions of the Mediterranean area.

In addition, this institution, which hopefully will succeed the glory of its predecessor, is also to be a centre for the conservation and preservation of library materials, especially those of medieval manuscripts which are still held in larger numbers in Egyptian mosques, Christian monasteries and museums.

An international architectural competition which will begin in September this year is to bring forth the best concept for the building on functional as well as on architectonic and aesthetic dimensions.

The importance of a library, however, depends upon the quality of its collection. Since the Egyptian government has had to gather enormous financial sums for the building site the building and the library operations, the international public and especially other libraries have been called upon to help. This help is needed above all for the collection, but also for the furnishings, the data-processing system and with the training of Egyptian librarians.

I firmly believe that precisely this project in a developing country whose ancient culture still places man today in a state of admiration and wonder can be sure of energetic support.

Let us then, my dear colleagues, in light of the general theme "Living together: People, Libraries, Information" take a definitive stand from the viewpoint of the international library community in a manifold of ways here and now as well as in the future. Moreover, let us like the old Pharos in Alexandria turn our libraries into lighthouses which point the right way to those who find themselves on the search for knowledge and perception. In this way we will make our contribution to the development in the individual country and to international understanding and trustworthy, co-operative work.

With these thoughts I officially open the 54th General Conference of IFLA 1988 here in Sydney.

ERÖFFNUNGSANSPRACHE DES PRÄSIDENTEN

H.-P. Geh, *Sydney, 1988*

Ein herzliches Willkommen entbiete ich Ihnen allen, die Sie zur 54. Generalversammlung der IFLA hier nach Sydney, dem Eingangstor Australiens gekommen sind, wo vor 200 Jahren die erste europäische Besiedlung stattfand.

Sydney bietet sich heute als eine bedeutende, betriebsame und gastfreundliche Stadt dar, geprägt von der bezaubernden Silhouette rund um die Hafeneinfahrt mit dem besonderen Wahrzeichen des grandiosen, in seiner Baukunst so einzigartigen Opernhauses. Unvergessen wird mir hier ein Konzert im November letzten Jahres bleiben, in welchem europäische und australische Musik zur Aufführung gelangte und wo ich somit bereits auf musische Weise in unser diesjähriges Generalthema "Living Together" eingestimmt wurde.

IFLA hält zum ersten Mal ihre Generalversammlung hier in Australien ab, einem Kontinent, von dem bereits der griechische Geograph und Mathematiker Ptolemäus eine — wenn auch blasse — Ahnung hatte, und den er terra incognita nannte. Wie wir wissen ist dieser Kontinent bereits vor etwa 40 000 Jahren besiedelt worden und in den letzten 200 Jahren sind dazu Menschen aus vieler Herren Länder in dieses so vielversprechende Land eingewandert.

Viele Rassen, Kulturen und Religionen bilden hier gleichsam einen Mikrokosmos gegenüber dem Makrokosmos unserer Erde. Erfreulich ist, daß in Australien kulturelle Eigenheiten sowohl der Ureinwohner als auch der späteren Einwanderer erhalten geblieben sind.

Theater, Konzerte, Museen und insbesondere auch die Bibliotheken führen die Pflege dieses kulturellen Erbes fort und vermitteln auf diese Weise gleichsam eine Einheit in der Vielfalt.

Bibliotheken spielen somit eine wichtige Rolle für die Integration von kulturellen Unterschieden in einem Gemeinwesen und es gilt an dieser Stelle besonders hervorzuheben, daß dieses multikulturelle Bibliothekswesen von der Library Association of Australia auch in starkem Maße gefördert wird.

Das Thema "Living Together: People, Libraries, Information" ruft aber nicht nur zur Zusammenarbeit und zu gegenseitigem Verstehen im nationalen Bereich auf, sondern auch in gleicher Weise im internationalen.

Angesichts der Interdependenz der Staaten und aufgrund des steigenden Informationsbedürfnisses in allen Erdteilen ist ein internationaler Austausch von Informationen ein Gebot der Stunde. Dieser freie Austausch von Informationen über Ländergrenzen hinweg, die universale Zugänglichkeit der Literatur und Information in traditioneller und elektronischer Weise sowie die Bewahrung des kulturellen Erbes in Form der Bücher sind daher wohl die wichtigsten aktuellen Aufgaben unseres Weltverbandes.

In diesem Zusammenhang kann man Kenneth Arrow nur voll zustimmen, der einmal sagte: "If one nation or class has the knowledge which enables it to achieve higher productivity, why are not the others acquiring that information?". Daher darf Information keinem Lande vorenthalten werden und es ist unsere Aufgabe, an vorderster Front zu dafür kämpfen, daß das Gefälle zwischen "information-rich and information-poor countries" so schnell wie möglich abgebaut wird. Zudem müssen wir alles daran setzen, um dem Bibliothekswesen in allen Teilen der Welt die entscheidende Rolle bei der Informationsbeschaffung und -vermittlung zu übertragen, zumal die Bibliotheken oftmals die einzige Quelle für den Zugang zu Informationen darstellen, und zwar zu Konditionen, die sich jedermann leisten können sollte.

Innerhalb des Spektrums der Informationsmittel hat das Buch auch heute noch trotz aller neuen Medien und Technologien eine dominierende Rolle inne. Und es besteht gerade in unserer Zeit ein besonderer Hunger nach Büchern. "Hunger nach Büchern" war auch das Generalthema des Kongresses der International Publishers Association in London im Juni dieses Jahres. Ich möchte dieses Thema kurz aufgreifen und zur Bedeutung des Buches und zur Leseförderung einige Ausführungen aus meiner Sicht machen. Dies scheint mir deshalb besonders angemessen zu sein, weil bei diesem Thema Verleger und Bibliothekare an einem Strang ziehen und mir die enge Zusammenarbeit mit den Verlegern auch ein besonderes Anliegen ist.

Über 500 Jahre hat nun die Welt mit der Erfindung Gutenbergs gelebt, eine Erfindung, die wesentlich stärker als das Blei der Kanonen zur Veränderung der Völker beigetragen hat.

Das Buch war in den zurückliegenden Jahrhunderten in allen Kulturnationen ein wesentlicher Träger der geistigen Kultur, und diese Funktion hat es auch jetzt noch zu erfüllen.

Das geschriebene und gedruckte Wort sowie das Lesen und sich Auseinandersetzen mit den schriftlich niedergelegten Gedanken, Darstellungen und Informationen sind wesentlicher und unentbehrlicher Bestandteil für alle Menschen. Denn ohne das geschriebene Wort ist die Überlieferung und Fortführung der Kultur nicht denkbar. Trotz einer Vielzahl neuer Medien ist und bleibt das Buch der wichtigste Funktionsträger für die Verbreitung der Literatur, aber auch für Forschung und Lehre und für den Austausch von Wissen, Meinungen und Ideen.

Bücher sind darüber hinaus wertvolle Botschafter von menschlicher Hochachtung und dienen zur Förderung des Verstehens und der Kooperation innerhalb und zwischen den Ländern und sind daher besonders wichtig für das friedliche Miteinander der Völker. "Das Buch", so sagte einmal der ehemalige Präsident der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Theodor Heuss, "ist der nachhaltigste Wegbereiter für das innere Verstehen der Völker".

Bücher müssen daher in genügender Anzahl und in großer Bandbreite in allen Ländern vorhanden sein, um jedermann die Möglichkeit des Zugangs zur Information zu geben und die Meinungsvielfalt zu gewährleisten.

Lassen Sie mich mit einem eindrucksvollen Zitat von Clarence Day die Bedeutung des Buches noch einmal zusammenfassend würdigen: "Monuments fall, nations perish, civilizations grow old and die out and after an era of darkness new races build others. But in the world of books are volumes that have seen this happen again and again. And yet they live on still young, still fresh telling men's hearts of the hearts of men centuries dead".

Aber Bücher müssen auch, was ideal wäre, von jedermann gelesen werden können, um den Hunger nach Wissen und Information zu stillen. Bekanntlich ist die allgemeine Lesefähigkeit wichtig für die politische, gesellschaftliche, wirtschaftliche und demographische Entwicklung der Völker und ermöglicht es den einzelnen Menschen, ihre Tätigkeiten, Talente und Stärken voll zu entfalten und somit einen größeren Beitrag zum Wohle der Gesellschaft zu leisten. Daher ist die Bekämpfung des in aller Welt noch bestehenden Analphabetismus eine Aufgabe von größter Dringlichkeit, die entschlossenes internationales Handeln nötig macht und bei der auch die Bibliotheken eine wichtige Rolle spielen können. Denn das Lesen überwindet nationale und kulturelle Schranken und das Buch ist darüber hinaus das wichtigste Kommunikationsmittel für ein nationales und internationales Zusammenleben.

Lesen gehört somit gleichsam zum Menschen dazu, aber es kommt auch ganz entscheidend auf das richtige Lesen an. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe hat es fast am Ende seines langen Lebens folgendermaßen ausgedrückt: "Die guten Leute wissen nicht, was es einen für Zeit und Mühe kostet, um lesen zu lernen. Ich habe 80 Jahre dazu gebraucht und kann es noch jetzt nicht sagen, daß ich am Ziel wäre".

Im Akt des Lesens entsteht eine eigene subjektive Wirklichkeit, die man auch als Innerlichkeit bezeichnen kann, in der man mit Wörten und Bildern, mit Affekten und Gedanken zu spielen vermag. In diesem Spiel wird der Leser fähig zum Dialog mit sich selbst, zum Denken. Lesen sollte somit auch Denken beinhalten. André Maurois hat in diesem Zusammenhang zwar einmal gesagt: "Viele lesen nur, um nicht denken zu müssen". Andererseits erfordert aber richtiges Lesen freilich auch Nachdenken über das Gelesene. Lesen ist darüber hinaus ein Prozeß permanenter Interpretation und Revision von Wahrnehmungen, wodurch der Leser besser am gesellschaftlichen Kommunikationsprozeß teilnehmen kann.

Spezielle Gefahren und Verlockungen gehen jedoch bekanntlich von den elektronischen Medien aus, und zwar für die Buch- und Lesekultur. All diese neue Effizienz der Informationsvermittlung, die wir freilich auch von bibliothekarischer Seite aus vielerlei Gründen nachhaltig begrüßen, darf nicht zur Verdrängung des Buches aus dem wissenschaftlichen und kulturellen Alltag führen. Denn wer sich ausschließlich der rechnergesteuerten fachlichen Daten bedient läuft Gefahr, zuviel rezeptiv und zu wenig kreativ zu arbeiten und beraubt sich der Aussicht auf Zufallsentdeckungen, wie sie ein Gang swischen den Bücherregalen und das Blättern in einem Buch mit sich bringen können.

Lesen bedarf somit der Anstrengung, Sammlung und Konzentration und nicht zuletzt der Zeit und Ruhe, die vielen unter den gegenwärtigen Lebensbedingungen fehlen. "In allem", so sagte schon Thomas von Aquin, "habe ich Ruhe gesucht und habe sie nirgends gefunden außer in einer Ecke mit einem Buch".

Daher ist Leseförderung, die zugleich Daseinsfürsorge bedeutet, auch durch die Mitarbeit der Bibliothekare so dringend in unserer heutigen Zeit, denn Lesen gehört zu den Bedürfnissen des

Menschen. Und Bibliotheken als moderne, aufgeschlossene und kommunikative Begegnungsstätten und Informationszentren haben ungeahnte Möglichkeiten und sind ein idealer Ort der Leseförderung.

Hinzu kommt, daß Bücherleser, wie ein Meinungsinstitut festgestellt hat, glücklichere Menschen seien und umgekehrt, weil Menschen glücklicher, interessierter und erfüllter sind, lesen sie auch Bücher.

Aus all dem ergibt sich, daß wir zusammen mit den Verlegern alles daran setzen müssen, dem Buche eine gute Zukunft zu sichern. Denn von den vielen Welten, die der Mensch nicht von der Natur geschenkt bekam, sondern sich aus eigenem Geist geschaffen hat, ist die Welt der Bücher die größte, die es aber auch zu bewahren gilt.

Daher wünschen wir uns für die Zukunft eine Welt, in der Bücher immer mehr Menschen leicht zugänglich sind, und in der die Fähigkeit zu lesen sowie der Wille und der Wunsch, die Früchte des Lesens zu ernten, von allen Gesellschaften in immer stärkerem Maße angestrebt wird.

Förderung des Lesens und Bekämpfung des Analphabetentums ist aber auch eine der wichtigsten Aufgaben der UNESCO, mit der wir von IFLA aus in sehr enger und freundschaftlicher Weise zusammenarbeiten.

Diese intensive Kooperative der UNESCO mit IFLA, aber auch mit FID und ICA wurde im Februar dieses Jahres dadurch sichtbar unterstrichen, daß die Präsidenten und Generalsekretäre dieser drei nichtstaatlichen Organisationen zum 13. Bureau-Meeting des Intergovernmental Council for the General Information Programme nach Nairobi eingeladen wurden. Die dortige mehrtägige Sitzung diente zunächst dazu, die Schwerpunkte der Sacharbeit der drei nichtstaatlichen Organisationen zu erläutern und die gemeinsamen Arbeitsfelder erneut abzustecken.

Darüber hinaus wurde erörtert, wie diese Kooperation noch optimiert und effektiver gestaltet werden könne. Und schließlich ist vereinbart worden, eine wirkungsvolle Strategie für die Konzeption von größeren Projekten in den Bereichen zu entwickeln, wo die Nöte der Entwicklungsländer derzeit am größten sind. Dazu gehören vor allem der Zugang zur Literatur und Information und die Konservierung und Präservierung von Bibliotheksmaterialien.

Abschließend wurde noch ein gemeinsames Statement der drei nichtstaatlichen Organisationen abgefaßt, das die Bedeutung von UNESCO's General Information Programme unmißverständlich unterstreicht. Es lautet:

"It is in the view of the three NGOs present (FID, IFLA, ICA) that as a consequence of the on-going world-wide revolution that affects the field of information in all its aspects (production, processing, storage and use) the relative weight of PGI within UNESCO's programme and budget should be reconsidered so as to enable UNESCO to serve with efficiency the Member States in this new environment. Without such a re-evaluation, UNESCO's leading intellectual role in the information area will be endangered in the near future. The three NGOs express the hope that the Member States will share this view on the urgent need for such a reflection for preserving continuity in UNESCO's action."

Darüber hinaus hatten die Vorsitzende des General Information Council Elin Törnudd und ich als Vertreter der 3 nichtstaatlichen Organisationen (FID, ICA, IFLA) im Beisein von Assistant Director General, Thomas Keller, Gelegenheit, mit dem Generaldirektor der UNESCO, Federico Mayor, am 7. März 1988 in Paris zusammenzutreffen.

In dieser Unterredung ging es um die Bedeutung des PGI Programms für den Gesamtbereich des Informationswesens sowie um das gemeinsame Wirken von IFLA, FID, ICA und UNESCO zum Wohle der Entwicklungsländer. Als Ergebnis dieses sehr konstruktiven und sehr freundschaftlich verlaufenen Gesprächs kann festgehalten werden, daß der Generaldirektor der UNESCO zugesagt hat, PGI zu stärken, dieses Programm intersektorial und interdisziplinär zu halten und seine Bedeutung in UNESCO's Medium-Term-Plan 1990–95 dadurch hervorzuheben, daß diesem Programm ein eigener Paragraph gewidmet werden wird.

Schließlich möchte ich noch zwei Ereignisse erwähnen, die auch die internationale Bibliothekswelt berühren und zu unserem Generalthema "Living Together: People, Libraries, Information" gehören.

Lassen sie mich mit dem sehr betrüblichen beginnen, dem unser tief empfundenes Mitgefühl gilt und das unsere Solidarität erfordert. Es handelt sich um den Brand in der Bibliothek der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Leningrad am 14. und 15. February 1988.

Das verheerende Feur hat 398 000 Bände, davon 188 000 Bände wertvoller ausländischer Literatur vernichtet. Darüber hinaus wurde ein Teil der bedeutenden Zeitungssammlung ein Opfer der Flammen. 3,6 Millionen Bände haben Wasserschaden erlitten und insgesamt 7 Millionen Bände mußten wegen Ausbreitung von Schimmel und Pilzen durch Begasung desinfiziert werden.

IFLA hatte nach Bekanntwerden des Brandes sogleich ihre Hilfe angeboten.

Vom 9. bis 12. Mai 1988 hatte ich als Mitglied einer UNESCO-Mission Gelegenheit, mir selbst einen Eindruck vom Ausmaß der Schäden zu machen. In den Diskussionen um die Probleme der Restaurierung, Konservierung und Präservierung der in Mitleidenschaft gezogenen Bibliotheksmaterialien sowie der Wiederbeschaffung wichtiger ausländischer Werke habe ich die Unterstützung der IFLA zugesagt.

Diese Hilfe ist von unseren Leningrader Kollegen und vom Präsidenten der Leningrader Akademie der Wissenschaften, Professor Glebow, dankbar angenommen worden. Was die Restaurierungsprobleme anbelangt, so ist die notwendige und mögliche Unterstützung in die Hände der Verantwortlichen unseres Kernprogramms PAC gelegt worden.

Im Hinblick auf den Ersatz verbrannter wichtiger ausländischer Literatur habe ich — wie verabredet — inzwischen von Herrn Prof. Glebow eine Aufstellung der Bücher erhalten, die unbedingt wiederbeschafft werden sollten. Wir haben diese Listen bereits an relevante Bibliotheken mit der Bitte verschickt, zu prüfen, welche Titel entweder im Original oder aber in Mikroformen der Akademie-Bibliothek überlassen werden können.

Ich möchte jedoch die Gelegenheit wahrnehmen, an Sie alle die herzliche Bitte zu richten, bei der Wiederbeschaffung — z. B. auch durch Geldspenden — behilflich zu sein. Hier sollten wir, wie wir es im Falle von Mexiko vor einigen Jahren getan hatten, ein deutliches Zeichen der Solidarität setzen. Ich hoffe sehr, in Paris über ein erfolgreiches Ergebnis berichten zu können.

Und zu guter Letzt noch ein erfreuliches Ereignis: die Wiederentstehung der Alexandrina-Bibliothek, die einst neben dem berühmten Leuchtturm ein Wahrzeichen dieser bedeutenden ägyptischen Weltstadt gewesen ist.

Nach von der UNESCO finanzierten vorbereitenden Studien und einem Symposion mit Architekten und Bibliothekaren im März dieses Jahres in Alexandria, an dem ich mit großem Interesse teilgenommen hatte, konnte am 26. Juni 1988 von Präsident Mubarak und dem Generaldirektor der UNESCO, Federico Mayor, der Grundstein für diese Bibliothek gelegt werden. Ich hatte die große Freude, auch dieser eindrucksvollen Zeremonie beizuwohnen.

Der Bau wird direkt am Meer, und zwar an der Stelle, wo einst das Museion mit der Alexandrina gestanden haben soll, errichtet werden.

Diese künftige Bibliothek wird ihre Pforten weit öffnen, und zwar für die Bevölkerung Alexandrias und Ägyptens ebenso wie für Forscher aus aller Welt, die sich vor allem mit Archäologie, Geschichte, Architektur, Philologie, Philosophie und Religionen des Mittelmeerraums beschäftigen.

Darüber hinaus soll diese Institution, die an den Glanz ihrer Vorgängerin anknüpfen soll, ein Zentrum für Restaurierung von Bibliotheksmaterialien, insbesondere von mittelalterlichen Handschriften werden, die noch in reicher Zahl in ägyptischen Moscheen, christlichen Klöstern und Museen gehalten werden.

Ein internationaler Architektenwettbewerb, der im September dieses Jahres beginnen wird, soll die beste Konzeption für den Bau sowohl in funktioneller als auch in architektonischer und ästhetischer Hinsicht erbringen.

Die Bedeutung einer Bibliothek hängt jedoch maßgeblich von ihren Beständen ab. Da die ägyptische Regierung für den Bauplatz, das Gebäude und den Bibliotheksbetrieb gewaltige finanzielle Aufwendungen erbringen muß, wird an die Weltöffentlichkeit und speziell an die bibliothekarischen Einrichtungen appelliert, vor allem beim Bestandsaufbau, aber auch bei der Möblierung, der EDV-Austattung und bei der Ausbildung von ägyptischen Bibliothekaren behilflich zu sein.

Ich glaube, daß gerade dieses Projekt in einem Entwicklungslande, dessen alte Kultur die Menschheit auch heute noch in Bewunderung versetzt, unserer tatkräftigen Hilfe sicher sein sollte.

Lassen Sie uns, meine Kolleginnen und Kollegen, hinsichtlich des Generalthemas "Living Together. People, Libraries, Information" sowohl hier und heute als auch in der Zukunft in mannigfacher Weise ein deutliches Zeichen von Seiten des internationalen Bibliothekswesens setzen. Und lassen Sie darüber hinaus gleich dem alten Pharos in Alexandria die Bibliotheken zu Leuchttürmen werden, die denjenigen, die sich auf der Suche nach Wissen und Erkennen befinden, den rechten Weg zu weisen in der Lage sind. Dadurch werden wir zur Entwicklung in den einzelnen Ländern und zur internationalen Verständigung und vertauensvollen Zusammenarbeit unser Scherflein beitragen.

In diesem Sinne eröffne ich die 54. Generalversammlung der IFLA 1988 hier in Sydney.

IFLA IN THE ANTIPODES: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Warren Horton, *Director-General, National Library of Australia*

I appreciate IFLA's invitation to present the plenary paper at this conference, and want first to support the comments already made by the Chairman of the Australian IFLA Conference Organising Committee and the President of the Library Association of Australia about the great pleasure of the Australian library community that IFLA is meeting here. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions is the major world-wide body with the basic objective in its own words of "promoting international understanding, co-operation, discussion, research, and development in all fields of library and information science activity", and we hope that Australian librarians will learn much from its visit to our shores. This is also however an opportunity for overseas visitors to learn more of the proud role of Australian librarians in the provision of effective library and information services to citizens of our nation, and of our interest in further developing our international role especially in promoting more effective library services in the Asian and Pacific regions.

The official invitation for IFLA to meet in Australia was delivered by Barrie Mitcheson on behalf of the Library Association of Australia at the 1985 IFLA Conference in Munich, following extensive discussions in Australia initiated by Denis Richardson and others following their attendance at the 1980 IFLA Conference in Manila. The National Library of Australia was pleased to be able to play a supporting part in these negotiations, especially through the decision by my predecessor Mr Harrison Bryan to fund a visit by Margreet Wijnstroom the then Secretary-General of IFLA in 1983 for necessary discussions with the Library Association of Australia. The Library is a strong supporter in its own right both financially and in other ways of IFLA. I am pleased to have this opportunity to pay tribute to the vision of Richardson, Bryan, Mitcheson and others in the early 1980s which has led to IFLA meeting here today.

IFLA at this conference departs from the previous practice of three opening plenary speakers, and invited only one speaker from the host country. I am aware that it is hoped this will allow that speaker to bring some strong national perspective to the address, while also embracing some broader international issues. It is a happy decision in terms of the Australian conferences, for while they are separate the two conferences run consecutively and share a common theme. The theme for both conferences is based on the Australian Bicentennial theme of "Living Together". The Library Association of Australia in its conference theme "Living Together — People Persuasion Power" has developed this theme with an Australian orientation for the consideration of issues on a national basis, while the IFLA Committee in its theme "Living Together — People, Libraries, Information" has broadened it to consider international issues. As the two conference chairpersons said in their joint invitation to attend, "in this sense there will be one conference with two parts, national and international". But both conferences rightly place great emphasis upon the importance of libraries to the cultural, educational and democratic development of the world's nations and both build upon the proud history of their sponsoring organisations in promoting these values.

The President of IFLA in his speech today has placed particular emphasis upon the role of the book, as an important vehicle of culture in all nations, and has stressed the great problems we all still face in meeting the worldwide hunger for knowledge and information. These issues are as relevant to Australia as other countries, but the place of the book and its value is strongly entrenched in Australian society. We will be moving to a reception in the State Library of New South Wales after this function, and the foyer of the old building of that complex is dominated by the following quotation from Thomas Carlyle carved in the wall:

> "In Books lies the soul of the whole Past Time; the articulate audible voice of the Past, when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream . . . All that Mankind has done, thought, gained or been: it is lying as in magic preservation in the pages of books. They are the chosen possession of men."

One of the exciting developments of the next few years in Australia will be the Year of the Reader programme, to be mounted in 1990. This will involve a major commitment by Libraries and other related organisations to a programme with the aim of convincing Australians that reading books increases a quality of life and of raising the level of literacy and numeracy skills which are relevant to today's society and which enhance job skills, productivity and the economic future of Australia. The exact focus of this campaign and its relation to the international year of literacy programme are still to be decided, but the specific objectives will undoubtedly include increasing the number of new readers in the community, encouraging access to reading for all sections of Australia's multicultural society and demonstrating the importance of the written word in cultural expression and communication in a technological society. It will draw heavily on the United States experience in their Year of the Reader 1987, while also paying due attention to the opportunities provided through the new information technology. Expect that the concept of establishing a Centre for the Book in Australia, roughly based on the United States model, could well also be an outcome of the year's programme. We are gratified that the initiatives fit so well with the thoughts expressed by Dr Geh on the importance of the book and the fact that reading crosses national and cultural barriers.

I now want to speak briefly about the question of information planning in Australia in the last five years, which I know is one of considerable interest to many of the overseas delegates, and then discuss some questions of Australia's involvement in the region and in IFLA in the future.

The concept of a national information policy for Australia, and more formal planning associated with it, has been under active consideration for the last seven years. The need for effective information planning was identified in the platform approved by the 1981 Conference of the Australian Labor Party, and shortly after that party was elected to Government in the 1983 elections the Caucus (the name for the meeting of ALP Parliamentarians) established a committee of four Ministers to carry the matter forward. An interdepartmental committee of Australian Government officials was set up later that year to consider NIP proposals, and some of these were widely discussed in library and other forums in the period 1984–87. They included the concept of a widely-based information industry consultative body, tentatively titled the Advisory Council on Information Policy, with libraries seen as a significant element in this umbrella body. The draft terms of reference considered for its operations envisaged a consultative body rather than one with executive powers, reflecting the very broad definition attached to the word "information" in the discussions, and a recognition that it covered almost all areas of Government operations. It is sensible to point out also to overseas delegates at this conference that Australia has a federal system of Government, in which various powers were by agreement transferred to the national Government when it was established on the federation of the States in 1901. The State Governments and Local Government retain strong involvement in information delivery matters, and the discussions about a national information policy in the last seven years reflect this division of powers and the need for complementary State Government information policies to any national policy.

These developments excited considerable interest overseas; Australia was seen as a leader in broad information planning. I did indeed at one stage assume that this address would be the opportunity to comment on the acceptance by the Australian Government of a national information policy, and the formal planning mechanisms which had been put in place to support it. However it is now clear that the move towards a national information policy at the federal level has collapsed, that no further work will be done on it and that there will be no adoption in at least the short term of such a policy by the Australian Government. This is a great disappointment to the Australian library community, which can be justly argued to have been one of the chief supporters of this campaign to have the Government adopt the national information policy and broader information planning mechanisms. The reasons for its collapse are interesting in themselves, and have implications for those delegates from overseas countries involved in broad national information planning issues.

The campaign for a national information policy in Australia failed because it was not seen, after four years, as an issue of importance by key politicians and bureaucrats, in a time of considerable economic difficulty for Australia and a climate where arguments for smaller Government involvement in the economy has been accepted by all political parties. In other words, information was not identified as an important issue or economic commodity in itself by the power players, and the need for more effective co-ordination of agencies delivering information to the Australian people and industry, business and education was not supported. This was undoubtedly in part because of a lack of understanding of the issues in a very complex environment, but also because there was obvious and clear disagreement about the boundaries of the term "information". The library community presented a forceful and effective series of arguments both in support of a national information policy and the place of libraries in it; Australian libraries on even the most conservative estimates employ over 30,000 people and have an annual budget of at least SA400m., so that their interest in these developments is for obvious reasons. However, many

of those participating in the debate from the communication and technology industries did not see libraries as key participants in the information industry. It is also clear that bureaucrats themselves had great difficulty debating the responsibilities for control of information co-ordination in Government, since the concept of a Ministry of Information or a Government Minister with the general carriage of information matters is alien to the Australian democratic tradition. In summary, the debate at the national level has now reverted to one of discussion of a much narrower range of technological and academic issues geared against the question of economic recovery, although it can be said that a wide-ranging consideration of information issues continues in New South Wales, Western Australia and some other States.

In setting out this depressing story at some length, because of the known interest overseas in this Australian debate, I do not intend to suggest that overseas delegates cannot learn much that is positive from the Australian experience. While it is a great pity that these moves towards the co-ordination of planning for effective library services into a broader information framework have not been successful, the ferment of interest in the issue of information planning has somewhat ironically led to very significant development towards the better planning of Australian library and information services. These will be of considerable interest to our overseas colleagues, and it is to them that I now turn.

The first is the concept of the Australian Libraries Summit planning process, which dominates our libraries agenda at the moment and which is a planning process in which many in this hall have invested considerable time, energy and hopes. This meeting, which is to be held in the National Capital from 16–19 October, is the climax of two years of planning involving librarians at all levels of our profession across the country. The Summit meeting's mission statement is "to determine and reach agreement on the most effective structures and processes for delivering library and information services throughout the nation", with key objectives including those of exploring the present pattern and possible alternative structures for library and related information services, exploring ways of coordinating collection development to create the most comprehensive possible national collection and considering proposals leading to a plan for improving access to the national collection. While it is largely funded by the National Library of Australia, its direction and management are very much in the hands of the Australian library profession. I think it can be fairly said that this planning process has very much captured the imagination and interest of the Australian library community, and that there is a great hope and expectation that the result will be a comprehensive series of agreements and recommendations for the better development of our library and information services behind which the profession can unite. If it is successful the final agenda will be the adoption of a series of co-ordinated recommendations which governments, libraries and our representative organisations should largely accept as the structure on which our services will be most effectively developed in the next generation. The President of IFLA has rightly drawn attention in his earlier remarks to issues of principle in the provision of effective library services which all in this hall accept, and these will be taken into account in the Summit debates.

The second area in which Australia can demonstrate developments of great interest to our overseas visitors is that of co-operative developments of library services; the programmes of both conferences and the associated seminars reflect this. Recent developments of interest include the decision by all major research and academic libraries to adopt the RLG Conspectus philosophy of collection description, so as to allow better co-ordinated development of the Australian national collection of library materials, and the considerable work towards an agreed policy on the effective provision of multicultural library services. Dr Hans Peter Geh in his address drew attention to the importance of multicultural library services in the integration of cultural differences, and developments in Australia are of world significance and will be studied with particular interest. Our experience in development of co-operative resource sharing networks also has much to interest the overseas visitor especially the Australian Bibliographic Network and other regional organisations and networks including CLANN, CAVAL and OLC. ABN was established with Australian Government approval in 1981, as a service provided by the National Library of Australia to the Australian library community but it is primarily a co-operative undertaking by that community. Its success in meeting its primary goal of assisting libraries to minimize the costs of cataloguing and sharing their collections is demonstrated by the fact that it now serves over 800 libraries across the nation and has a total budget in excess of $A6million.

What I have been demonstrating in this speech to date is I hope the diverse nature of Australian librarianship, while outlining developments in areas I know to be of interest to overseas librarians and IFLA. I hope I have given a picture of a self-confident and vigorous profession, one which shares the belief of IFLA in the importance of libraries and their contribution to the well-being of society. IFLA's visit to Australia, which is unlikely to be repeated in the lifetime of most of us in the hall, will in turn be a catalyst for Australian librarians to widen their knowledge of overseas developments and heighten their involvement in the activities of IFLA and other appropriate overseas developments. It is to these matters that I now want to briefly turn.

The IFLA/LAA Conference is the largest gathering ever of overseas librarians to come to this region of the world, but in particular is also a wonderful opportunity for Australian and New Zealand librarians to learn more of library activities in the Asian and Pacific countries. It raises however the pressing question of the effectiveness and adequacy of library support programmes to those countries from the developed countries in the region, including Australia and New Zealand. I know that there has been considerable discussion of this issue in almost all regional international meetings in the last few years, especially those sponsored under the auspices of various UNESCO programmes, and that in general there is a belief that we can and should do more.

I share this belief. In the case of Australia we can take considerable pride in the various overseas aid programmes already operating, especially those developed under the leadership of Allan Horton and others through the International Development Program of Australian Universities & Colleges (IDP) and the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB). The National Library of Australia's Regional Co-operation Programme, including for example the developmental programmes to the National Library of Vietnam and the National Library Service of the Solomon Islands are important) while its book placement and other general programmes systematically reach over twenty countries in the region. Other agencies and individuals have also made a very significant contribution, often on their own initiative. The key question is whether we can do more, and I believe that Australia and New Zealand can and should do so. I hope therefore that one of the major long term benefits of this conference will be a lasting impetus for the development of further targeted developmental programmes to the region, and I will certainly take the initiative in convening the necessary discussions among interested parties to achieve this if they so wish. Naturally these programmes must take account of the needs of the region as defined by those in it, rather than being based on the perception from countries such as Australia of what might be useful. The success of the present programmes is precisely because they have been based on the concept of working with the countries concerned. Australia itself has much to gain by cooperation in the region, which can be to our benefit as much as to that of the countries we work with.

In saying this I point out however to my international colleagues that the concept of targeted programmes needs to be fully understood, since it cannot guarantee the same level of support or indeed the same programmes to all countries in the region. It also requires a degree of understanding of the funding difficulties under which almost all Australian libraries now operate, since developmental programmes are not easily funded out of these diminished resources and there is a widespread misunderstanding in the region about the level of Government support which is available to us.

It goes without saying that IFLA itself as a body with a major interest in developmental programmes to Third World countries, also seeking the co-operation of interested parties to effectively develop its new core programme on the advancement of librarianship in Third World countries, must be sensitive to the particular political imperatives attached to this programme. The Asian/Pacific region is a long way from the other side of the world, and the centralized models of other IFLA Core Programmes will not work in this case. I believe it will be of advantage to this region if our other developmental programmes are as closely allied as possible to the new IFLA initiative, and if we can, when appropriate, work within its core programme on the advancement of librarianship in Third World countries. This will however require considerable sensitivity by IFLA in the governance arrangements it develops for the new core programme, which must take account of the already strong regional interest and experience in the matter and the particular sovereignty of political issues attached to such programmes.

Finally, I would like to prospect briefly the question of future regional involvement in the affairs of IFLA. I was one of those who in the early 1980s strongly supported the Library Association of Australia in its decision to invite IFLA to meet in Australia in 1988, the Bicentennial year celebrating 200 years of European settlement in

this country, and I applaud the generosity with which IFLA in accepting the invitation parted from its usual practice of insisting that the IFLA Conference be completely separate from that of the host country's Library Association. It would not only have been impossible for this country to mount the IFLA Conference separately to the Association's own obviously important biennial conference, but the interaction of the two programmes will be to the decided advantage of both overseas and Australian delegates. Like most others involved at that time with this key decision by the Library Association of Australia, I had never attended an IFLA conference, participated in its activities in any other way,nor indeed been very aware of its importance. Australian involvement in IFLA at that stage was very much limited to a small group of interested and forward thinking librarians including Dietrich Borchardt, Geoffrey Allen and the recently-arrived Patricia Layzell-Ward. I have had the honour and good fortune to represent the National Library of Australia overseas et the last three IFLA conferences, and I am now much better informed of the importance of the organisation and the wide range of its activities. However IFLA having met in Manila in 1980, Tokyo in 1986 and Sydney in 1988 will not be returning to the region until it meets in Delhi in 1992. The greatly increased representation from Australia, New Zealand and some other countries in the region at IFLA conferences in recent years probably reflects the fact that conferences have been held in the region, and that it is meeting in Sydney in 1988. A serious question has to be what level of involvement the region now takes in the affairs of IFLA and what IFLA for its part does to encourage this.

A three day conference is not the sole basis on which this decision should be made, but unfortunately it will be the basis on which most regional librarians form their long-term impressions of IFLA. I hope they will leave with a firm understanding of the importance of IFLA to international librarianship, and of the great amount of work done by IFLA members at all levels and especially through the Divisions. Certainly Mr President, no delegate who hears you speak during this conference will be left in any doubt about your own commitment to developing IFLA's role as the key agency promoting international librarianship and in particular its effective involvement in the development of library services in Third World countries.

Two things will be required if the region's involvement in IFLA is to continue or indeed increase. The first is that it be given a higher priority by those of us in the region, notwithstanding the inevitable difficulties of distance, high travel costs and funding difficulties in less well-developed countries. I have little doubt that this conference will be the impetus for this, to cement the importance of IFLA in the perspective of those primarily responsible for library developments across our region.

The second and perhaps more important is that IFLA itself rigorously scrutinize and further develop its own operations so that it effectively allows and indeed encourages the involvement of librarians from this region of the world, and from South America and Africa. It is increasingly said that the next great stage of economic development will occur in the Asian-Pacific rim countries, and I am quite certain library and information services in the region are in any case on the edge of a major period of expansion for the rest of the century. It is essential that the profession in the region now energetically exercises its rightful role in IFLA, and that IFLA continues to develop positive strategies to remove the widespread perception that it is essentially a European (and increasingly United States also) based organisation.

With goodwill on all sides, and perhaps a heightened understanding by IFLA itself of the particular constraints distance imposes upon much of the world in dealing with an organisation headquartered for good reasons in Europe, I am sure this can be done. For my part I know that I speak on behalf of all my Australian colleagues when I finish by saying that we are delighted to have you here, that I know the conference will heighten understanding of IFLA's importance among delegates from our region and that we hope the delegates from elsewhere will be impressed by the vitality of librarianship in Asia, the Pacific and Oceania. Dr Geh has fittingly commented on the essential importance of libraries, the book and new forms of information technology to the world's information and cultural needs. We congratulate IFLA on its work to date in addressing these problems, and look forward to a continuing strong involvement from this region of the world in its future activities. The theme for the two conferences addresses issues of principle end practice central to the concerns of IFLA and Australian librarians, and I hope that our deliberations over this week will be to the benefit of the worldwide community that we serve.

END

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Date Filmed

March 29, 1991